

IT NEWS

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From the Director

Welcome to our fourth edition of the IT Newsletter. The new academic year has got off to a good start, and it's great to see our staff and students back and refreshed after the summer break. We completed the Blackboard upgrade and migration project over the summer and just recently we finished the upgrade of our Student and Financial system to Banner 9. These are three of the biggest and most important applications at the university and this is a terrific achievement. A huge amount of work has been undertaken to allow the university to migrate these applications to the cloud and update them to the latest versions. And now that they are cloud based they will always be the latest versions, allowing our staff and students the greatest IT services available. Enjoy the newsletter.



Banner 9 Upgrade – COMPLETE!

After over a year of hard work, the university's key financial applications for Student Information & Finance have been upgraded to the latest version, Version 9. This has moved the university forward six years and will be the last upgrade that we have to work on. From now on the applications are managed in the Cloud by Ellucian, ensuring we are on the latest and greatest version, and providing assurance to the university that our systems are compliant and effective. Our IT team can now stop working to keep the application running and focus on helping our business areas to achieve optimal value from the applications. This is a significant enabler to the university's strategy of SPIRIT.

Blackboard SAAS - COMPLETE

Over the summer the IT Team was busy working with Blackboard to migrate our on-premise application to the new Blackboard as a Service cloud. This was another big project and Anissa Bettayeb and her team have done a great job to achieve this project in the short timeframe available, allowing the university to be live on the platform for the commencement of this academic year. We are already seeing significant performance improvements and the elasticity of the cloud architecture perfectly suits these types of applications where demand can spike at peak periods, allowing the cloud infrastructure to scale up processing power to meet demand and providing a consistent high quality student experience. Again, as with Banner, the maintenance of the application will be managed by Blackboard from here on, ensuring all security measures are in place and that the latest capabilities are in the hands of our staff and students as soon as they are available. This ensures that the University of Sharjah is a leading university in the region.

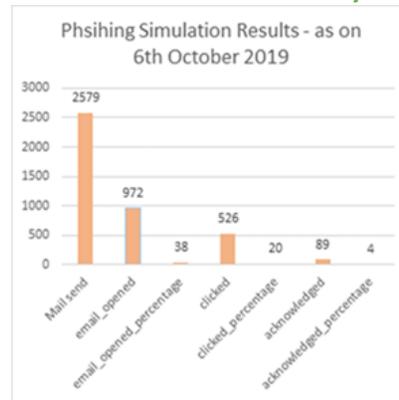


2019 Learning Spaces Summit

In September this year the Dean of Academic Support Services (Dr Hussein Elmehdi) and the Director of IT (Robert Irving) attended the fourth Learning Spaces summit in Barcelona. It included over 140 delegates from 26 countries and staff from Facilities, Libraries, Student Administration and Vice Chancellors. The views and ideas of the group were fascinating and it is clear that many universities are grappling with the changes currently facing education. It was particularly interesting to hear that students are also challenging the changes in the ways they are being taught, and the changes in teaching techniques needs to include them. Today's students are far more involved in their education, and rightly so.

We came away with many great insights, but most importantly that in order for our university to be successful we need our academic staff and students to champion the types of learning spaces and technologies to be provided.

IT & Information Security



Earlier this year IT rolled out the Wombat security training for staff. This recognizes that one of the biggest risks to the university is its own people's lack of cyber awareness. A lack of awareness is a key risk and one that we are trying to improve. We conducted a Phishing email security test recently and over 900 of our staff opened the email, and more than 500 of our staff clicked the link. Had this been a genuine phishing email, that would have resulted in more than 500 infected computers on our network. That could be anything from data theft to the encryption of your data, or used to gain access to other university systems. It is critically important for the security of all staff and our students that we take the time to complete the training, to really understand it and apply it in our everyday digital lives. Having good digital practices at work also helps to ensure your private digital world is also protected.

Departments Online sites Pilot Phase (Sharepoint Online)



University of Sharjah started using Microsoft SharePoint Online service which is a tool for collaboration across teams for an enterprise employing Microsoft products. SharePoint Online will allow employees to work together on Office documents, create shared workspaces for cross-department teams and keeps everyone up-to-date.

Colleges, Departments, Administrations, Centers, V.Cs and Research institutes have their own materials including Documents and shared folders.

The new Online sites will help in:

- Collaborative private area for document sharing and teamwork activities
- Managing and tracking projects and meeting minutes
- Accessing the content any time anywhere through desktop or mobile
- Well organized materials
- Helping university to go Green and eliminate printing files
- Auto Backup files

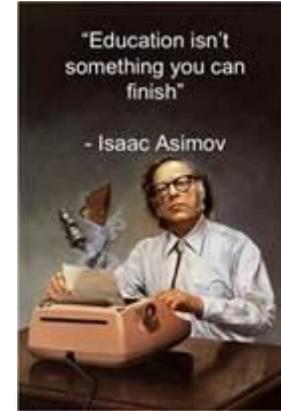
IT Orientation day - Fall 2019-2020

The IT Center Organized at the beginning of the Fall semester 2019-2020 an IT Orientation day to all faculty members specially the newly joined highlighting the latest IT Applications and services released recently. During the day variant hands-on workshops were delivered by IT Centre professional staff in Arabic and English focusing in several areas such as support services, Banner system and how to build your course in blackboard.



Linked In Learning

Don't forget to access the LinkedIn Learning platform that is provided to all University of Sharjah staff. It's a great resource for developing personal and professional skills.



<https://www.linkedin.com/learning>

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